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Week 2: Reading Summary

Sidney Xu Lu dives into the topic of Japanese colonial expansion into Hokkaido in the Meiji era, which led to trans-Pacific migration and imperial expansion in Asia. Lu argued that the idea of overpopulation as a driver and justifier of colonial annexation was born in the era of Hokkaido expansion, as Meiji officials described Japan proper as “overpopulated and poor,” while Hokkaido is “empty and rich” (Lu 2019, 523). Even after the emigration into Hokkaido, overpopulation was maintained as a common theme throughout the expansion campaigns of the Japanese empire. This can be seen by the publication of quantitative data by the Meiji leaders as they highlight and expose the demographics of its people and natural resources to the public.

This legitimization of Japan’s expansionist motives was also influenced by the expansion of the Western empires, as the modernization of Japan was proof to the Japanese that they deserved equality in all aspects, including the right of expansion on a global scale. In particular, the Japanese used Anglo-American settler colonialism in Native American America as a guide in their expansion into Hokkaido, comparing the Ainu to the Native Americans, with a sort of Social Darwinist mindset. Lu uses primary sources, including the *Hokkaido kaitaku zasshi* (HKZ), associated with the Hokkaido Development Agency, as well as various essays and articles by Japanese intellectuals and Malthusian advocates.

Sources:

Lu, Sidney Xu. 2019. “Eastward Ho! Japanese Settler Colonialism in Hokkaido.” *The Journal of*

*Asian Studies* 78. No. 3 (2019). 521-547.